

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

DATE: 23 Jan 74

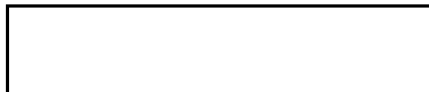
TO: DCI

FROM: NIO/SEA

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

The attached is for your information. We have checked this out with OCI and TBL. OCI is in the process of preparing a WHSR on the subject.



Bob Layton
Acting NIO/SEA

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23 January 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI

FROM : NIO/SEA

SUBJECT : Possible South Vietnamese Air Action
Over Laos

1. We have received indications of possible South Vietnamese air action in Laos. The indications are:

(a) Photography of 21 January 1974 which showed at least 27 bomb craters and two destroyed vehicles located about 14 kilometers inside Laos adjacent to the South Vietnamese border (see map). The craters were not visible in 11 January photography of the same area. The size of the craters indicate that 500-pound bombs were possibly dropped.

(b) A report from local observers in Laos that an "American specter-style aircraft" straffed along the Se Kong and Nam Khong rivers in Laos on 17 and 21 January (see map).

(c) A statement by a spokesman of the Lao People's Liberation Army on 18 January which condemned the GVN for sending six aircraft to "bomb and strafe" an area 14 kilometers inside Laos on 11 January.

2. We have no information concerning exactly what has transpired in Laos on this matter. The South Vietnamese have been conducting bombing raids in South Vietnam in areas adjacent to where the craters were observed, and the distance involved is such that a simple navigational error could account for the bomb craters in Laos. The reported strafing along the Laotian rivers, however, is harder to explain. These areas, located west and southwest of Attapeu, fall

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about 60 kilometers from the South Vietnamese-Laotian border.

3. Although it seems highly unlikely, it is possible that South Vietnamese aircraft were not involved in the alleged strafing. The reference to "specter-style" aircraft would indicate a gunship of some type, a plane that South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and the US possess. But it seems unlikely that the GKR would be flying missions in this area since it is far removed from where normal Cambodian operations occur. Similarly, the area is not one where the Laotians are likely to be conducting operations. Finally, although there were USAF gunships on training sorties in Thailand on 17 and 11 January, there is no evidence that any of them wandered over into Laotian airspace.

4. Thus, at this time, the presumption is that the South Vietnamese probably are the perpetrators of the incidents. But this is only a presumption, we will keep you informed when further information clarifying the matter is received.

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